

May 2, 2014

Honorable Michigan Legislators:

Please read my story and support the Breast Density Education bill. I was diligent getting an annual mammogram as my mother had breast cancer. My grandmother died at 51 of ovarian cancer. My brother died 2 years ago at 52 of pancreatic cancer. These cancers are related. Two years ago during a physical, I remember my doctor's exam, her saying I had dense breasts and, "it was a good thing that I was getting a mammogram" the next week. When last year's mammogram letter came back as normal, I again was relieved to be safe for another year, or so I thought.

Neither I nor my Dr. were informed enough to know that using a mammogram to find cancer in a dense breast is like looking for a golf ball in a snow bank! According to my surgeon and radiation oncologist, my cancer had been missed for 2-3 years by digital mammograms, even though I went to the same imaging center for 10 years for supposed easy comparison to the prior years. I should have had an ultrasound or MRI.

Six months ago I found a firm area, got a mammogram with ultrasound and a biopsy resulting in a diagnosis of invasive lobular cancer 2.8 cm (over 1 inch) tumor size. After a double mastectomy including 11 lymph nodes removed, another 1.4 cm (1/2 inch) tumor was found in the lymph node.

Because my cancer was there for so long it had spread to my lymph node, requiring more aggressive treatment. My bilateral mastectomy was followed by 4 rounds of chemo, and I am now in daily radiation for 6 weeks or I would be in Lansing to speak to you in person to support the Breast Density Education bill.

I trusted last year's "normal" letter from the clinic. My radiation oncologist said that there is a terrible lack of awareness in the average doctor regarding the difficulty of detecting cancer in a dense breast. No one ever told me that I should really have a different test. Women whose cancer is caught earlier have a much better survival rate. I try not to think about that.

The treatment I am undergoing is of much more cost to my insurance company (past \$60,000 and climbing) than would have been needed if I had had early detection. That would offset a lot of ultrasounds! This bill would give a better chance of early detection and a better chance of survival.

Breast density matters! There is no public awareness of the fact that a mammogram of a dense breast is a fibrous white picture; cancer is also white and cannot be seen 52% of the time on a mammogram.

Fifteen other states have passed similar legislation to raise breast density awareness. The first was Connecticut in 2009. It is time for Michigan to get on board. Please support this bill that would give breast density information to women and their doctors so they can get further testing if a family history like mine. This is the opportunity to save lives!

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Milliken Muniz